

May 7, 2014

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM ... while dusting



Continuing on with Abe Snyder's oral interview with Jim McCamley in 1980.

Referring to Harrington Creamery, Abe says: "Our ice cream sales were dependent pretty much on the weather in those days because ice cream was then sold mostly in the summertime and the hotter the summer the more ice cream was being sold. And, of course, weather also had an effect on the farmer. Just like this year the dry weather would certainly have an effect on the pasture, and the pasture being poor – that would lower down the milk production. So weather was a factor in the milk industry."

"At first each farmer drove in his own milk. Then they had a man who would go along and he'd get hold of maybe 12 or 15 farmers and say I'll take your milk to the plant for so much a hundred. Generally the rate was around .35 cents to .40 cents a hundred pounds of milk." [One gallon of milk equals ten pounds of

weight.] "We paid the driver and just deducted it from the farmer's milk price when we paid him."

Abe was then asked about the Civil Defense that was started in Sullivan County. Because of the initial scare years ago of atomic weapons, he states: "you'd have to have a 90% proof building that we only had a few of them in the county. Now the dairy was one of them. We had 3 or 4 rooms set aside there. Up at the air base [Red Rock Job Corp Center] we had permission to use their place in case of an air raid. And we advised everybody of the churches that had basements. So, that's about all we had." These concerns were not so much that Sullivan County would be the target of bombing but rather susceptible to fall out from fumes or gases. He goes on to answer Jim's question of Civil Defense being taught in the schools to which Abe replied: "I think Mrs. [Milly] Frazer was one that taught Civil Defense over there several years in the high school."

He goes on to explain the early forestry efforts for protection from forest fires that lent to what Abe next describes. "today [remember 1980] the forest in Sullivan County are excellent and we have fourteen or fifteen sawmills that are sawing the timber that we protected for the last fifty years. In 1920 you could have gone to any number of acres of land you wanted for \$1.50 to \$2.00 an acre. Today that same land is worth \$1,000 to \$1,500 an acre. So it shows what was done by protection. Gifford Pinchot [Pa. governor] was the man who really inaugurated this type of work for forestry."

The mines at one time from 1900 to 1920 there were a lot of mines operating in Sullivan County. Then all of a sudden competition between our semin-anthracite and anthracite got so bad that they had to close them down. But now again, they have these strip mines and this oil thing goes through that they have to have coal." Abe saw our forest, mines and agriculture as being the main economies of Sullivan County. Saying to young Jim "you boys, if you're going to stay here, you ought to get into one of those things." He also went on to tell Jim McCamley about his own son, Jim, who had died in 1957 in an accident, and had excelled in journalism. That Jim had been asked by while taking journalism at Columbia to go meet some visitor from Europe on the wharf in Newark and "make him realize he is in the United States" Well, now, for a kid from Dushore to go down to Newark and do that took nerve and just what you're doing here, it will give you a little confidence in talking to people. People are pretty much the same no matter where you be."

Abe Snyder was 84 years old when he gave this interview and like so many of the other oral histories (which is also on voice recording), it is an education in history to hear or read these reflections.

To read or hear more of these, phone 570-946-5020 or email museum@scpahistory.com